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175 181 teenth-century ancestors from the factory at Bhamaw, far up the Irrawaddy on the confines of China; but Bagyidaw, the king, said, like the Lord Buddha, "All can take life, but who can give it back?" The Burmese annalist relates: "The kalabyu, the white strangers from the west, fastened a quarrel upon the Lord of the Golden Palace. They landed at Rangoon, took that place, and Prome, and were permitted to advance as far as Yandabo; for the king, from motives of piety and regard to life, made no effort whatever to oppose them. The strangers had spent vast sums of money on the enterprise; and by the time they reached Yandabo their resources were exhausted; and they were in great distress. They petitioned the king, who, of his clemency and generosity, sent them large sums of money to pay their expenses back, and ordered them out of the country."

175 ● 648 By the Treaty of Yandabo, extorted by the fear that the capital would fall into the hands of Sir Archibald Campbell, then thundering at the gates of Ava, the English acquired the provinces of Tenasserim and Arakan, and deprived the sovereign of two-thirds of his sea-board. The Province of Pegu, which was annexed after the second Burmese war in 1852-53, has never been formally ceded by any treaty. King Mindôn said, "Let them stay there; I cannot turn them out, but I will not be written down as the king that gave up Rangoon." Lord Dalhousie said, "A treaty with a man like that is useless"; and he straightway fixed upon a parallel of latitude as the northern boundary of British Burma, and put up a line of frontier pillars along it without reference to the Burmese Government at all. The Mahā Yazawin said, in effect, "The foreigner was starving in his own land, and the king bounteously granted him a resting-place in the dismal swamps by the sea." Until the Burmese kingdom finally disappeared the only approach to a recognition of the British possession of Pegu was an announcement from Mindôn Min that "orders had been issued to the governors of districts not to allow the Burmese troops to attack the territories of Myedè and Taung-ngu, in which the British Government had placed its garrisons." Well may it be said that Burmese kings submitted to accomplished facts, but did not sanction them. Shortly before the storming of

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Malun, the King Mintayagyi sent a note to Sir Archibald Campbell representing that "it was contrary to his religious principles and the constitution of the Empire, to make any cession of territory, and he was bound to preserve its integrity."

Naturally, therefore, the up-country Burman thinks that his race is the bravest in all the realms of Zampudipa, the island in the south, with all its five hundred surrounding islets. The idea has been little checked by English communications and relations with the Lord of the Golden Palace. Such documents as the following are duly inserted in the Mahā Yazawin, and lose nothing in the translating. This was sent, in 1695, by Nathaniel Higginson, Governor of Madras, to the King of Ava. "To his Imperial Majesty who blesseth the noble city of Ava with his presence, Emperour of Emperours, and excelling the Kings of the East and the West in glory and honour, the clear firmament of Virtue, the fountain of Justice, the perfection of Wisdom, the lord of Charity and Protector of the Distressed, the first mover in the Sphere of Greatness, president in council, victorious in war; who feareth none and is feared by all; centre of the treasures of the Earth, and of the Sea; Lord Proprietor of Gold and Silver, Rubies, Amber, and all precious Jewels; favoured by Heaven and honoured by all men; whose brightness shines through the World as the light of the Sun, and whose great name will be preserved in perpetual memory."

After this promising exordium the letter goes on: "The fame of so glorious an Emperour, the Lord of power and riches, being spread throughout the whole earth, all nations resort to view the splendour of your greatness, and, with your majesty's subjects, to partake of the blessings which God Almighty hath bestowed upon your kingdom above all others. Your majesty has been pleased to grant your especial favours to the Honourable English Company, whose servant I am; and now send to present before the footstool of your throne a few toys as an acknowledgment of your majesty's goodness, which I beg your majesty to accept, and to vouchsafe an audience to my servants and a gracious answer to my petition."

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He finishes by asking leave to send a factor next monsoon to reside at Syriam, opposite Rangoon, on the other side of the Pegu river. Edward Fleetwood was the envoy. He had to wait a long time before the gate of the palace stockade was opened; when that was done he had to bow three times to the building; half way across the esplanade he had to bow humbly three times again; then at fifteen yards' distance, and finally had to make the same obeisance to the king.

The answer to the governor, in the name of the ministers, ran as follows: "In the East, where the sun rises, and in that Oriental part of it which is called Chapudu; the Lord of water and earth, the Emperor of Emperors, against whose imperial majesty if any shall be so foolish as to imagine anything, it shall be happy for them to die and be consumed; the lord of great charity and help of all nations, the great Lord esteemed for happiness; the Lord of all riches, of elephants and horses and all good blessings; the Lord of high-built palaces of gold; the great and most powerful Emperor in this life, the soles of whose feet are gilt and set upon the heads of all people; we his great governor and president here, called Mahā Eggena Tibodis, do make known to the governor, Nathaniel Higginson," and so it goes on in the same strain, concluding with a notification of the presents sent—1500 viss of lac, 2500 viss of tin, 300 viss of ivory, 6 earthen dishes, and 8 lacquered boxes. This was, however, more satisfactory than that which fell to the lot of Ensign Lester in 1757, when he got a concession of Negrais Island and a commercial treaty from the conqueror, Alaungpaya. The gallant envoy received a present of eighteen oranges, two dozen heads of Indian corn, and five cucumbers. Two years later the garrison on the ceded island was massacred. The national annalist gloats over these things.

Here is another petition from the white foreigners: "Placing above our heads the golden majesty of the mighty lord, the possessor of the mines of rubies, amber, gold, silver, and all kinds of metals; of the lord under whose command are innumerable soldiers, generals, and captains; of the lord who is king of many countries and provinces, and emperor

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over many rulers and princes, who wait round his throne with the badges of his authority; of the lord who is adorned with the greatest power, wisdom, knowledge, prudence, foresight, etc.; of the lord who is rich in the possession of elephants and horses, and in particular is the lord of many white elephants; of the lord who is the greatest of kings, the most just and the most religious; the master of life and death; we his slaves, the governor of Bengal, the officers and administrators of the Company, bowing and lowering our heads under the sole of his royal golden feet, do present to him, with the greatest veneration, this our humble petition."

Such documents might have flowed from the chronicler's own pen, and the Burmese historical student, in reading this unbought praise of nations, naturally takes it as honest homage due to the race, since there is now no king. So exalted an idea had the Court of the military power of the country that in 1810 a minister at Ava told Captain Canning that if proper application had been made to the king, he would have sent an army to Europe and put England in possession of France, and so ended all the troubles of the beginning of the century.

Most envoys sent to the Arbiter of Existence were treated very cavalierly in the way of interviews; not a few in the old days waited long months without ever seeing the king at all. All, down to Sir Douglas Forsyth, in 1874, had to go in shoeless, and sit cross-legged on the floor, an unaccustomed attitude which did not tend to render the position less ridiculous. In other ways they were treated with every indignity. When King Mintayagyi heard that Colonel Symes was coming, he went away to Mingôn, to contemplate his gigantic failure at a pagoda there. Thither the colonel had to follow him, congratulating himself on the circumstance that as the king was away from the palace, there would be the less trouble in seeing him. But he found himself vastly mistaken. On arriving at Mingôn he was told to take up his quarters on an island in the middle of the river. On this barren place, shunned by all Burmese as a polluted spot, where bodies were burnt and criminals executed, he had to remain forty days, and during all that

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time not the slightest notice of him was taken by the court. Finally he was admitted on a kadaw, or "Beg-Pardon Day," one of those set apart for all inferiors and vassals to come and do homage and worship at the Golden Feet. For long it was the invariable custom to receive representatives of foreign states on these days. Colonel Burney was the first to refuse to be so treated, and he carried his point, though the wungyis told the king the reason why he did not come on the appointed kadaw day was because he was sick. The utmost protestations of Symes and Crawford failed to save them from the humiliation. Another favourite method of showing contempt for foreigners and exalting the national dignity was rather curious in its elaborate ingenuity. Foreign missions were provided for by a tax levied on outcasts. The money was only collected when an embassy was expected, and was applied to no other purpose than providing accommodation and food for the members of the mission. The coin was considered too vile to be put to any other use. Delaying the envoy at the gates was an invariable device. Just as he came up to the entrance a band of princes, with their followers, would turn in from a side street, and the luckless representative of England would have to stop and bite his nails till they had all passed in. Colonel Burney was delayed two hours in this way, and even Colonel Phayre, the first Commissioner of the three coast provinces, in 1856, had to wait on his elephant till the Eingshemin and his train filed in before him. Arrived at the palace, all the earlier envoys were made to fall on their knees, and shikho to the central spire of the royal residence. The members of the embassy of 1856 were nearly bullied into taking off their hats to the pyathat. The object was to show them as suppliants at the Golden Feet, honoured by being allowed to view his dwelling, and elevated to the summit of earthly ambition by being admitted to an interview. Symes and Cox paid for their admission in this way. Besides this official bad treatment the plenipotentiaries were victimised with numberless personal insults. Even the Supreme Court on at least one occasion refused to see Cox. He was knocked up long after midnight one night by a clerk who wanted to get a nutmeg-grater to show to the king. The

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Myowun wrote to him to say that as the envoy would not take his advice he must break off all intercourse, and the English thanthaman would be good enough not to come near his house for the future. Captain Cox had had a fence put up round his house to keep away the inquisitive rabble, at a cost of twenty rupees. One morning when he woke up he found this had been unceremoniously carried away, and that it had been used to enclose a place near the river where the heir-apparent's head might be washed. Finally great pressure was put upon him to take the oath of allegiance to the king; he was to drink the water in which the muskets and lances of the guard had been dipped, and it was expressly stipulated that he should pay for his oath just as any Burman would have to do. Scores of like details might be mentioned with regard to all the other ambassadors and residents. It will be sufficient, however, to mention that, in later years, one resident had a cane flourished over his head by a convict lictor, and that the last *chargé d'affaires* of all was chased by a howling rabble from the Mandalay bazaar to the Residency gates, which were broken in—no great exertion of strength was necessary certainly—all because he had killed a pariah dog that was snapping at his heels.

If the various Government representatives were treated in this way, non-official Englishmen could not expect great reverence to be paid to them, and it is hardly worth mentioning that in 1881 a Rangoon merchant, yelled at by convict lictors, went down on his knees while one of the leading spirits of the massacres, the Hpaung Wun, went by on his elephant. Little wonder then that the patriotic fictions of the Mahā Yazawin were believed, and that the perusal of them was all the more greedily indulged in. The wearing of shoes in the Palace was never settled till there had ceased to be a Lord of it.

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But it is not so much the English that suffered—though occasionally a few of them did get stoned—as the smaller nations and tribes who live around and among the Burmese. It must be acknowledged that the Burman is a sad bully; but the white strangers could reduce him to civility, if to nothing else, very speedily. It is different with other races—some perhaps aboriginal, some invaders of Burma as much

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look after him. The Burman turned out a most wicked and unscrupulous guardian. He pretended to teach him, but only showed the blank side of the slate, so that the poor Chin never learned a single letter. He rubbed the elephant's back with cowhage, so that the Chin's bare legs were so tickled that he refused to have such an unpleasant animal, and gave all the elephants to the Burman. By similar tricks the buffaloes, the horses, and the cattle were obtained. When the Chin mounted to ride on the horse, the Burman's wife got in the way, and was knocked down; and as compensation for the injuries she sustained, and to quiet her clamour, the horse had to be handed over. Then at the Burman's instigation the Chin went to view his buffaloes, clad in fiery-red garments. The buffalo naturally chased him up a tree, and before he could gain the earth again the buffaloes had gone the way of the elephants and horses. Ultimately nothing remained but goats, pigs, and fowls. Even the barren mountains were not left in his undisturbed possession. When the boundaries of the different countries were marked out, the Burman took very good care to mark his with stones and pillars, but he persuaded the Chin that tufts of grass were good enough for him. These were all burned away by the jungle-fires, and then the despoiled Chin had to live wherever the Burman told him. Thus the race has never had a country or town of its own, but wanders about in a nomadic way over the hills on the fringe of Burma. The well-known custom some of the frontier Chin women have of tattooing their faces is an existing proof of this tyranny. They are naturally pretty; and this disfigurement—for they themselves acknowledge it to be such, and never adopted it in the heart of the Chin hills—was adopted to prevent the Burmese from carrying them off, as they once did constantly.

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The stories of the Mahā Yazawin fully account for and justify these queer traditions of the national religion of the Chins. But it is not in such minor points that the annalist is seen at his best. It is when he vapours about Chinese and Siamese and Munipuris, who come in armies numbered by hundreds of thousands, with elephants in tens of thousands, and the guardian nats of the nations fight on their respective

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sides and serve to account for Burmese retreats—then it is that the spirit of the Mahā Yazawin comes out and streams along in true 'Ercles vein. And except the plays the Burman has no other literature to read. It is not wonderful, therefore, that he has as good an opinion of himself as the "centennial Yankees."

> Breathes there a Yank, so mean, so small,
> Who never says, "Wal now, by Gaul,
> I reckon since old Adam's fall
> There's never growed on this 'ere ball
> A nation so all-fired tall
> As we centennial Yankees.'

The writer might well have been a worker on the Great Chronicle of Kings.

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CHAPTER XLVIII

KING THIBAW

[The following three chapters remain as they were written in 1880.]

I.—A PRIVATE INTERVIEW

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TIME was, when to get an interview with the Arbiter of Existence was as difficult a matter as to see the Grand Lama, or the Sherif ul Islam of Mecca. When the servants of "the Foreign Woman," Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, protested in 1879 against the new sovereign's summary settlement of domestic matters, Thibaw swore a royal oath by the sacred hairs of Gautama, by the Lord, the Law and the Assembly, the three precious things, that he would never look on a white man again. For a year the vow was religiously kept, and ambitious "globe-trotters" and prying special correspondents were kept at a distance, and had not even the satisfaction of being admitted within the outer gate of the nandaw. In time, however, the royal coffers got low, and it was thought foolish not to make use of the barbarian merchants, seeking for monopolies and grants of forest land, and able and willing to pay enormous sums for such concessions. His majesty's ministers therefore speedily found means of relieving the great King of Righteousness from his solemn oath. The first principle of the Buddhist faith is charity. How, then, could the Lord of the Rising Sun gain more merit and advance some miles on the noble Eightfold Path better than by conquering his just personal antipathies and allowing awe-stricken foreigners to grovel before the splendour of his effulgence and worship at

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648 his Golden Feet! When once they had experienced that supreme delight, his majesty's ministers might be trusted to see that the wealth of the merchants was made to subserve the royal interests. And so it came to pass that Thibaw first received a few speculators and their friends, and has ended by granting an audience to any European that can get a minister to speak for him. And so the Golden Hairs are forgotten, and the three precious things calmly flouted. Still the royal barbarian is not comfortable at these interviews. He was too curious to be dignified. He had not the fund of conversation that his father had, and he was impatient apparently of being looked at, as strangers in remote parts of China and wild beasts in zoological gardens may be supposed to be.

Securing an interview is not always an easy matter, unless you are a great capitalist, desirous of a grant somewhere. If you merely wish to see his majesty, the process is somewhat difficult. You probably apply first of all to the Chevalier Andreino, Italian Consul in Mandalay, and master of ceremonies and mysterious "doing duty" man at the Burmese Court. He may get you the desired audience, but more probably refers you to one of the higher ministers. Almost certainly these officials will say that it is impossible for you to see the king. His majesty is too busy, "working hard all day at affairs of state"; and they gaze stolidly upon you. You regret the circumstance extremely, make the minister a present of a few hundred rupees, and continue to deplore your bad luck. Then he brightens up suddenly, recollects that on such and such a day his majesty is possibly free. He will find out and do his best for you.

Next day you are told that an interview will be granted, that the king of kings graciously permits you to come and place your head under his gilded feet. If you are a wise man and have been warned by considerate friends, you will now commence to practise sitting on your feet. It is as well to rehearse the process frequently beforehand, for they must be tucked away so that his majesty cannot see them; and if you do not find the most agreeable way of effecting the concealment, your audience will be chiefly memorable to you for frightful agony, a vast amount of internal "popular

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language," and vows of vengeance against the ministers, who seem to have an irritating faculty of grinning all down their backs.

The journey to the palace is not a pleasant preparation. It is too hot to ride, and accordingly you decide to go in the apotheosis of a dog-kennel on wheels, which does duty for a carriage in Mandalay. There is not room for much more than one Englishman in the vehicle, and the only way you can get in is by scrambling over the backs of the bullocks. I shall never forget my first experience of a Mandalay carriage. After an exciting ten minutes spent in trying to circumvent a kicking bullock, I at length got in and sat down on the floor—there are no seats—to gaze out at the round hole by which I had got in. The rest of the party followed, each man in a kennel of his own. The beasts set off at a swinging trot over roads of the early depraved order, and in a couple of minutes we were all regretting that we did not brave the sun and ride, or even walk. However, the drivers disregard our entreaties, and hustle up the cattle all the more energetically. We pass over the moat, and through the enormous wooden gateway into the walled town. We enter by the a-mingala gate, the south-western, the only one through which corpses are allowed to be taken from the city. It is almost invariably used by Englishmen as being nearest to the Residency and the river, but no upper-class Burman will pass through it if he possibly can avoid doing so. After five minutes' more jolting we arrive at the outer stockade of the palace, and get out of our conveyances with some alacrity and a lot of bruises. Immediately inside the gate is a guard-house, with a cluster of the royal soldiery, who, as we come up, squat down on the ground and hold their Enfields in front of them at the third motion of the present, looking like frogs on a Christmas card.

We cross a wide open space, pass through the "Red Postern," and turn to the left, for it is to be a private reception, and we do not ascend the steps to the Hall of Audience. We pass a gallop which Thibaw has laid down for his ponies, and enter the Royal Gardens. They are not much to speak of. Laid out in squares, with raised paths, deep brickwork canals running in every direction, grottoes and

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Kin Wunmingyi, who, after all, had been to Europe and was versed in public affairs, lost all influence, and was succeeded as adviser by the Taingda Mingyi, a statesman of the typical oriental kind, supple, unscrupulous and grasping. Thibaw even achieved a certain kind of popularity with his subjects. He insulted our representative and blustered at all foreigners, and finally frightened the Indian Government by covert threats into suddenly withdrawing the whole *personnel* of the Residency. Then it was announced by sound of gong all over Burma that the Sovereign of Land and Water, by reason of his great might and glory, had caused the hated English to flee from his sight, and would, in his own good time, carry the great peacock flag to the south, and plant it once more on the shores of the Gulf of Martaban.

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It is a great triumph for the pôngyi's son, as he was nicknamed when it was safe to do so, and it will be remembered about him quite as long as the fiendish cruelty of his massacres. We have certainly not done with Thibaw yet. We cannot go on for ever keeping strong garrisons at Thayet-myo and Toungoo, our frontier stations, where the soldiers have little else to do but die of fever and cholera and heat-apoplexy. Constant scares ruin the trade in Rangoon, and, as Lord Ripon says, when we are attacked in our mercantile interests we are wounded in our most irritable point. The abrogation of the monopolies is little better than a sham, and the negotiations for a new treaty are little more sincere. Thibaw will not receive a new Resident in the Royal City, except shoeless and practically lying on his stomach. We can hardly agree to that again.

The rupture came six years later, brought about by secret treatings with France and autocratic dealings with the Bombay Burma Trading Corporation. The Burmese kingdom fell with the suddenness of a paralytic stroke, and King Thibaw was a prisoner within a month of his rejection of the British ultimatum. He now lives forgotten at Ratnagiri.